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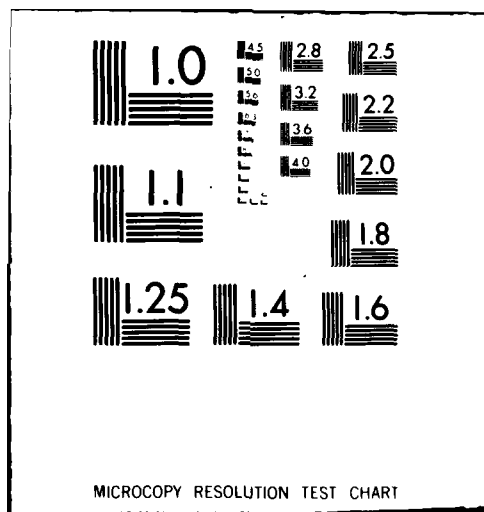
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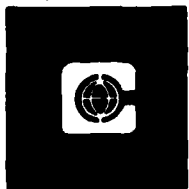
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SALT TWO: AN ASSESSMENT

by Leon Sloss

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

February 6, 1980

Mr. Harry Schrecengost  
Defense Technical Information  
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Sincerely,

Edward N. Lundstrom  
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Bureau of Intelligence and Research

SALT TWO

An Assessment

By Leon Sloss

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<i>Gen J.S.</i>	
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#### NOTE

As part of ongoing CSIS research efforts to analyze national security affairs and the Center's larger effort to assess world-wide military, economic, and political trends which affect the security and foreign policy of the United States, this study is designed to stimulate discussion of the formulation and conduct of foreign and security policy. The author is a State Department Senior Fellow in Residence at CSIS and was Deputy Director of Political-Military Affairs at the State Department from 1973 to 1974.

The views expressed in this monograph are solely those of the author and are not attributable to either the Department of State or to CSIS.

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## I INTRODUCTION

On November 24, 1974, President Ford and Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev announced that they had reached agreement on the outlines of a SALT TWC agreement covering strategic offensive forces. The President and Secretary Kissinger have hailed the tentative agreement as a most significant achievement that "caps the arms race" and furthers detente. Influential Senators who were skeptical of SALT ONE, such as Barry Goldwater and Henry Jackson, have been publicly critical of the agreement, as have some representatives of the arms control community who claim to see little in it that curbs arms competition. It appears as if another major strategic debate is shaping up around this proposed new agreement long before it is to be submitted formally to the Senate. There is even a prospect that the Senate will call on the Administration to make major revisions. The main issues appear in the following questions:

What does the proposed agreement constrain?

What programs and activities would be permitted?

Could something better be negotiated, and if so, what?

What is the effect of the agreement on overall United States - Soviet relations, and what would be the effect if a major effort were made to modify the agreement?

What are the verification problems? and

What are the political ramifications?



## II. MAIN FEATURES

Many details of the proposed agreement have yet to be negotiated. However, the main provisions of the aide memoire which contains the substance of the agreement reached at Vladivostock have now been widely discussed in press reports. These reports indicate that the aide memoire provides that each side will have an equal number of strategic delivery vehicles (2,400) and an equal number of missile launchers with multiple independent re-entry vehicles (MIRV) (1,320). U.S. forward-based aircraft and missiles would not be included in the figure and, presumably, the Soviet Backfire bomber would be excluded as well. It appears as though mobile missiles would be permitted, although they would have to be included within the figures if they met the definition of "strategic". There would be no limits on IRBMs and MRBMs. Presumably, the limit on modern large missiles which was in the SALT ONE agreement would be carried over in SALT TWO. No specific limits on bomber armament have been discussed, but it must be expected that this, along with many other details, will be the subject of subsequent negotiations during the next several months. There will be no specific limits on payload or throw-weight. While it was initially rumored that negotiation of further reductions would be deferred until after 1980, recently it has been reported in the press that the original draft of the aide memoire has been revised to permit negotiation of reductions at an earlier date.

To arrive at the total figure of 2,400 delivery vehicles, the Soviet Union would have to make some reductions (about 150). (See attached table). The United States

would be permitted to increase its forces by about 250 units. However, if one assumes that the United States and the Soviet Union will replace all older systems during the ten-year duration of the agreement, the United States might deploy as many as 665 new systems (250 to reach the agreed level, 200 to replace obsolete bombers, and 214 to replace Polaris and Titan missiles); the Soviets could deploy more than 1,500 (if they replace all present ICBMs and build up the SLBM figures permitted by the Interim Agreement on Offensive Weapons (IA) ).

### III. MAJOR BENEFITS

The main benefits of the agreement claimed by the Administration are: (a) that it gives the United States equality in aggregate numbers by contrast with SALT ONE; (b) that it places a specific ceiling on the numbers of delivery vehicles and MIRVd missiles that can be achieved over the next decade; and (c) that the Soviets have agreed to the exclusion of FBS and allied strategic systems from the agreement. It is as yet unclear whether the Soviets will agree to drop the provisions in the ABM Treaty prohibiting transfer of offensive systems or technology to third parties. A more generally claimed advantage is that the achievement of a further SALT agreement helps to keep alive the improved atmosphere of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. It has been clear for some time that the Administration's strategy for assuring that the improvement of United States - Soviet relations becomes an irreversible process is to punctuate the process periodically with a major new agreement. The agreement clearly advances that process. The agreement's sup-

porters contend that further negotiations would not have produced a better agreement at this time, that the agreement will facilitate future reductions, and that it does not defer reductions to any fixed date. They also claim that in the absence of an agreement the Soviets were likely to have superiority by 1986 both in total numbers of missile launchers and in MIRVd missiles. The President has noted that the United States can, if it wishes, build up to achieve parity and match Soviet throw-weight. It also is argued that the superior U.S. bomber force offsets greater Soviet missile payload.

#### IV. MAJOR CRITICISMS

The major criticisms of the proposed agreement are: (a) that the figure for total delivery vehicles is so high that it will require the United States to build up in order to achieve essential equivalence, thus stimulating rather than curbing new strategic programs; (b) that the MIRVd figure concedes parity to the Soviets, again at a higher figure than necessary for either party; (c) that there are no limits on throw-weight, thus making it possible for the Soviets to deploy more or larger MIRVd warheads within the agreed launcher constraints than the United States, and eventually placing the United States at a disadvantage in counter-force capabilities; (d) that because reductions are deferred until the 1980s, it is impossible to improve on the agreement for a decade; and (e) that the agreement was reached in undue haste, thereby precluding the possibility of negotiating a better agreement. As to the exclusion of FBS, this is matched by the exclusion of Backfire, which at least some would maintain is more of a concession by the

United States than by the Soviets. Finally, critics fear that the apparent U.S. eagerness to achieve agreements favors the Soviets and encourages them to seek advantages from the United States in future negotiations.

#### V. WHAT IS CONSTRAINED

The answer to this question depends, of course, on what might have been done in the absence of an agreement. This is highly speculative when one is talking of a period some twelve years into the future. However, there is little doubt that the Soviet Union and the United States have the capability of developing and deploying strategic forces far in excess of the 2,400 level over the next decade. There is considerably more doubt that either party would have done so in the absence of an agreement. The United States reached a decision in late 1960s to add warheads rather than delivery vehicles. For some years, the ICBM force has stood at 1054 and the SLBM force at 656, while the effective bomber force has gradually been declining. During this period, single warhead missiles have been replaced by multiple warhead missiles. The United States has shown little inclination to change this general approach unless forced to do so because of fear that the Soviet Union might forge ahead in numbers. Even so, the United States would not be in a position until the late 1970s to increase the gross number of strategic launchers, and, even then, only by retaining old bombers and SLBMs in the force. In short, the agreement constrains U.S. programs very little, if at all.

Soviet goals are less clear (at least to us), but it appears as if they also had decided to concentrate on mo-

modernizing rather than increasing their forces in recent years. The new ICBMs clearly appear to be replacements for older ones rather than additions to the total force. Indeed, the Soviets accepted levels in SALT ONE that would oblige them to reduce their ICBM force in order to deploy the allowed number of SLBMs. It is less clear that the Soviets had in mind a halt to SLBM deployment after 1976, and they would be in a position to increase their SLBM force in the absence of an agreement. However, it is hard to see why they would want many more than 950 SLBMs (allowed in SALT ONE) for any military purpose. It seems more likely that the main Soviet intent, like that of the United States, has been to devote its resources to replacing single war-head systems with MIRV. As for bombers, the only active Soviet strategic bomber program at present is Backfire, which apparently is not constrained by the agreement. Some see this as a major loophole, but others contend the Backfire is not intended to be a strategic bomber.

The MIRV level of 1320 appears designed to accommodate planned U.S. programs. It would permit deployment of 10 Trident boats (240 missiles) without requiring the United States to retire any Poseidons or SS-9s. It also would permit the Soviets to deploy 1320 MIRVd missiles, or about 120 a year over the next eleven years. This is probably considerably less than their capability, if past experience is any guide. During the peak of the SS-9/SS-11 programs, the Soviets reached a deployment rate of 250-300 missiles per year, all in new silos, whereas the prospective deployments of the coming decade should take less time because they are estimated to be in modified existing silos. Reported Soviet insistence earlier this year on a 1979 figure of about 1,000 MIRVd launchers also suggests a capability to deploy far more than this by 1986 (Gelb, 1974).

Thus, the proposed agreement would seem to constrain the Soviets to less than their theoretical deployment capability, but still provides for a very substantial MIRV program.

One could also speculate that if the Soviets achieve an agreement that gives them parity in MIRVd launchers, they might well slow down deployment of MIRVd ICBMs. The agreement would, in effect, confer parity on them some years in advance of its actual achievement which would have considerable psychological and political value. They might then decide to slow the pace of deployment of new ICBMs, which will be increasingly vulnerable, and thereby save more of their MIRV allowance for SLBMs.

The administration has placed particular emphasis on the fact that the agreement does set fixed outer-limits on the deployments of both sides. This helps to avoid "worst case" planning insofar as numbers are concerned. However, the "worst cases" that most people can foresee in the next decade involve such factors as accuracy, improvement in anti-submarine warfare (ASW), and numbers of MIRVs per missile, none of which are constrained by the proposed agreement.

## VI. WHAT IS PERMITTED

The agreement places no limits on numbers of warheads or throw-weight. The Soviets, with their larger missiles, could and probably will have more missile warheads than the United States by 1986. The United States will have considerably more bomber weapons. Given the characteristics of bombers and missiles, the U.S. force should be superior in scenarios involving limited options, but in the more traditional first-strike scenarios the Soviet force would be superior because of its better capability against time-

urgent targets. In a second strike, both forces will be more than sufficient for deterrent purposes and, in addition, will be able to cover a large number of military targets. Overall, the Soviet force, with more and larger missiles, may well appear superior, and indeed will be in certain scenarios. This could have political and psychological advantages for the Soviets if they want to project an image of superior power to third parties. Some argue that there will be strong pressures on the United States to build larger missiles in order to stay even with the Soviets.

The agreement apparently permits mobile missiles, although they must be counted against the ceilings. Mobiles present some difficult verification problems. There will be uncertainties about the number actually deployed, which again leads to "worst case" planning.

Although the proposed agreement provides for equal numbers, there is at least one major asymmetry that favors the Soviets. The United States may well have to spend more than the Soviets to maintain parity, and will surely face greater political opposition to such spending. The reason the United States may have to spend more is based on two factors. First, the United States will have to build up to reach the agreed total level, while the Soviet Union can cut back. Second, while the Soviets have to build up more than the United States to reach the MIRV launcher levels, the United States may be compelled under this agreement to build new launchers with greater throw-weight in order to match the other side's counter-force capability or, alternatively, take steps to improve the survivability of their forces, or both. In any event, it seems unlikely that the United States will build new fixed, land-based missiles, given their growing vulnerability. Alternative systems based at sea or in the air are likely to be very costly.

Given current attitudes towards defense spending in the United States, it can be expected that such programs will face major opposition.

#### VII. COULD WE GET A BETTER AGREEMENT?

This is really the main issue between the Administration and the doubting Senators. It is difficult for anyone who was not a direct party to the details of the negotiations to prove that we could have done better. On the other hand, there is frequently a tendency for those immersed in a negotiation to lose some perspective and to become beguiled with reaching an agreement. The critics have questioned whether it was a wise tactic for a U.S. President, only a few months in office, to have attempted to reach agreement on such a complex issue at his very first meeting with the Soviets. He could have deferred discussing details for some months and thereby probably have put greater pressure on the other side to agree to better terms. On the face of it, one is compelled to question whether it was not possible to have obtained somewhat lower figures both for aggregates and for MIRVs. The 2,400 aggregate, if obsolete systems are discounted, is well above current U.S. levels. This, in the view of some critics, virtually assures that the United States will be under pressure to engage in major new strategic programs just to meet the levels agreed upon, and keep even with the Soviets. Many have argued that this is hardly arms control.

The other side of this argument is that the agreement had been under negotiation for many months and the extent of Soviet flexibility should have been well known. Further delays might not have produced a better agreement.



In a few more months, the Soviets would have been engaged in actual MIRV deployments, and the United States engaged in the 1976 Presidential campaign. These might not have been auspicious conditions for SALT negotiations.

Whether it is possible to obtain major changes in the terms of the provisional agreement, as suggested by Senator Jackson, is very much open to question. The President is now committed to these provisions. Many Congressmen who would prefer a better agreement will be reluctant to embarrass him and the nation by attempting to reopen the negotiations. The case for getting what we can, while we can, will be persuasive to many, as will be the case against upsetting detente. However, if the Congress expresses strong support for including reductions, or at least a specific commitment to reductions, in a final agreement, it has been argued that the Administration's hand in negotiations would be strengthened. Whether this is now a wise course to take depends upon its impact on overall United States - Soviet relations.

#### VIII. THE EFFECT ON UNITED STATES - SOVIET RELATIONS

One's assessment of the proposed agreement, and of whether to accept or try to improve the present terms, depends heavily on fundamental views of the relationships between arms control agreements and overall political relations. Those who hail the agreement believe that agreements have a beneficial effect per se on political relationships. This is not to say that they believe in agreements solely for the sake of agreement, or that they consider the proposed agreement perfect. However, they believe that it is the best, or close to the best we can do now, and that it is important to have another SALT agree-

ment soon because without one there is a risk of further competition and a worsening of relations between the super-powers. They would certainly prefer a partially satisfactory agreement to none at all, and would not try for perfection at the risk of getting nothing.

Three groups of critics can be identified. One school favors arms control agreements as a means of reducing political tensions, but doubts that the proposed agreement does much to curb arms. They are particularly concerned about the potential for arms competition within the agreement. They would want to see an agreement with more restrictive, quantitative constraints, and far more qualitative limits.

A second school is skeptical that arms control agreements promote better political relationships. They believe that this agreement will give the Soviets some margin of strategic advantage, particularly because of their larger missiles and greater potential counterforce capability. They anticipate that, far from curbing competition in strategic arms, this agreement will encourage it because the limits are placed so high. They are also concerned that if the United States appears to be making concessions to the Soviets, and to be in too great haste to conclude an agreement, the Soviets will believe they can achieve advantages in other negotiations, such as MBFR.

A third group rejects the traditional models of arms competition, and thus doubts that the agreement either curbs competition or stimulates it. This group focuses its criticism on what they consider to be exaggerated claims made for the benefits of the agreement, and on the apparent haste with which the agreement was concluded.

It is of some significance that these three schools of thought, for the first time, have some common ground.

All three find the agreement inadequate. However, it is not clear that they will in the last analysis join forces to thwart or modify the agreement drastically. The first school will be far more concerned than the others that an effort now to change the agreement risks upsetting present United States - Soviet relations. While they might wish for a better agreement, they are likely to settle ultimately for what they can get. The one area in which most of those opposing the present terms agree is that an effort should be made to secure assurances from the Russians that negotiations leading to reductions will not be postponed until the 1980s. This strong pressure for early reductions apparently prompted the reported clarifications in the aide memoire.

#### IX. VERIFICATION

While the major provisions of the SALT TWO agreement were established at Vladivostock, many details have yet to be worked out. Probably the most important of these have to do with verification of the agreement. The subject is extremely complex, and certain verification capabilities are shrouded in secrecy. Thus, no attempt to cover this subject in detail will be made here. However, the major verification problems appear fairly evident.

It must be assumed that the main principles of the ABM Treaty with respect to verification will apply to the new offensive arms agreement. These are that verification will be by national technical means, and that neither side will interfere with the national technical means of the other. At the present time, we are told that high confidence exists in verifying the numbers of missile launchers established in the Interim Agreement (Nixon, 1973; Rogers,

1972). This should also be true of the proposed SALT TWO agreement. However, the limits in the new agreement, like the Interim Agreement, should apply to launchers (i.e., silos) rather than to missiles as the former present far fewer verification problems than missiles, which can be hidden. There are a number of other provisions which could increase confidence in verification of missile launchers, such as treating all missiles of a given class as being MIRVd and limiting the geographic location of MIRVd missiles (Getler, 1974). It should not be difficult to verify bomber numbers, but there may be some problems with verifying long range missiles carried by bombers if these become the standard of measure rather than the bomber itself.

As previously noted, the main problem involved in verifying aggregate numbers of delivery vehicles will be posed by the deployment of mobile missiles. There is likely to remain some uncertainty as to the precise numbers deployed. It will be necessary to define how much uncertainty is tolerable, and how much is likely to exist. If the latter exceeds the former (and this will be a judgment rather than a precise calculation), some supplemental means of verification may be required.

Verification of MIRV levels presents greater complexities. We have been told that the deployment of the new generation of Soviet MIRVd missiles requires modification to the silos that can be observed by national means (Getler, 1974). If this is so, adequate verification of deployment of MIRVd ICBMs should be possible. However, it is likely that the Soviets will deploy a MIRVd SLBM during the ten year-period of the agreement, and this is not precluded by the provisions announced thus far. The growing vulnerability of fixed ICBMs and the

observed Soviet desire to match U.S. capabilities should impel them to proceed with a MIRVd SLBM even though they have not, as yet, tested one. Once a MIRVd SLBM has been tested, how are we to know how many have been deployed, and how the Soviets plan to divide the allowed number of MIRVs between ICBMs and SLBMs? The simplest approach is to count all missiles that have been tested in a MIRV mode as having been MIRVd. However, the Soviets can be expected to have some difficulty with this approach. Their SS-18 has been tested in both a MIRV and a single warhead version, although there have been relatively few MIRV tests of this missile. If they propose to deploy some of these missiles in the single warhead version, they will not want them counted against their MIRV total. Should they test the SS-18 (their newest SLBM with a range of over 4,000 miles) with MIRVs, they would not wish all SS-18s counted against the MIRV total at the time their tests are completed. By then, they may have some 372 deployed in 31 boats, but it will be some time before all are MIRVd. The United States, however, may be unable to learn, once the deployment of a MIRVd SLBM begins, how many have been deployed. One way around this problem would be if the MIRVd SLBM does require a new boat or major modification to existing boats that can only be undertaken at specified shipyards. However, it is not clear that Soviet plans meet these specifications, or that these plans would preclude fitting of a MIRVd SLBM into existing boats.

The precise verification problems will become clearer in the next few months. It can be anticipated that many who are skeptical of the agreement will tend to minimize them. As a result, it seems likely that there will be far more public debate over verification than has been the case in the past. This may require difficult decisions by the

U.S. government as to how much previously classified information on verification capabilities can and should be made public.

#### X. POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS

So far, rather little attention has been given to the long-range political effects of the proposed agreement. Both the United States and the Soviet administrations appear highly satisfied. Soviet press commentary has been very enthusiastic, although it has avoided details. Preliminary commentary from third countries has been largely favorable. The Europeans, in particular, are gratified by the exclusion of forward-based systems from the new agreement. The main criticism has come from within the United States and, as previously noted, it has come from those who believe the limits could and should have been set lower. However, these are immediate reactions; it seems worth attempting to speculate about the longer-term effects of the agreement on United States - Soviet relations and on third-country perceptions of the power balance.

Although it will be a number of years before the Soviets achieve parity in MIRVd launchers, the agreement gives them the image of having achieved parity well before they could actually expect to catch up with the United States in numbers of MIRVs. They could easily see this as having distinct political advantages for them in terms of their power image in the world. There also will be overtones of superiority because of their advantage in missile throw-weight, which they could exploit politically, or which will be exploited for them by U.S. critics of the agreement. Finally, if one assumes that there really are

"hawks" and "doves" in the Soviet Union, the agreement would appear to be a victory for the "doves", and for the policies of the current leadership.

In the United States, the agreement clearly represents a victory for the Nixon/Ford policy of negotiation and demonstrates President Ford's ability to continue the relationship started by his predecessor. However, there may be some cost to the relationship if the ensuing debate casts serious doubts on the utility of arms control agreements. For those who believe that current political attitudes towards defense programs in the United States preclude major increases in defense spending, and indeed presage further cuts, the agreement will be seen as protecting the best possible balance the United States could hope to achieve. For those who fear that the agreement will be used by the Soviets to enhance their strategic position, the agreement will be seen as creating false hopes and impeding U.S. efforts to maintain an adequate balance. The likelihood of disagreement in the United States over the value of the agreement and the need for new strategic programs may be seen by the Soviets as being of political benefit to them.

The future impressions of third parties are uncertain and apt to be mixed. They will depend a great deal on what is said about the agreement in the United States and the Soviet Union, and generally there is a good deal more said in the United States. It is already clear that what will be said here will be contradictory, and one can be sure that what is said in the Soviet Union will be carefully orchestrated. However, it seems likely that two long-standing impressions of United States - Soviet relations will be further confirmed by this agreement.

One is the growing strategic power of the Soviet Union relative to the United States. The other is the strong desire of both parties to continue the process of arms negotiations. It should be emphasized that the agreement only reinforces these impressions. Had there been no agreement at Vladivostock, they still would have existed.

Insofar as U.S. policy is concerned, the political effects of the agreement will depend primarily on how policy makers choose to interpret the agreement. On the one hand, there is the risk of misplaced optimism. Clearly, this agreement does not end strategic arms competition. To act as if it did and fail to provide for the continued modernization of U.S. strategic forces could result in a shift in the power balance in favor of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, there is the risk of misplaced pessimism. Many are disappointed because the agreement does not do more to restrain strategic arms, but how realistic was it to expect more in an area as sensitive as strategic arms, and between powers who still retain as many conflicting objectives as the United States and the Soviet Union? The fact that these negotiations were possible at all does demonstrate progress in relaxing tensions and increasing understanding between the super-powers. Diplomacy, as Secretary Schlesinger recently reminded us, is the art of the possible, and SALT is very much an instrument of diplomacy. Those who expect much more from arms control negotiations expect too much from diplomacy.

## XI. CONCLUSIONS

In my opinion, the agreement is neither as momentous as some of its supporters claim, nor as disastrous as some



of its critics would have us believe. The limits established are higher than what might have been negotiated, but limits as much as 25% lower would make little difference strategically. The FBS issue has been put to rest, at least so far as SALT is concerned, and this is a definite plus in terms of U.S. relations with its European allies. The issue of indefinite postponement of reductions has seemingly been resolved by the recent change in the aide memoire. Perhaps the initial critics can take some credit for this desirable adjustment. On the other hand, the agreement has hardly halted the so-called arms race. It is becoming increasingly clear that this figure of speech is a poor representation of the complex interaction that exists between U.S. and Soviet programs. While the proposed agreement may remove some uncertainties about future Soviet programs, it leaves many others, such as their future counterforce objectives. Nor has the agreement significantly altered the prospects of a nuclear conflict which were already low.

The most significant implications of the agreement have received little comment. A new U.S. President capped his initial meeting with the Soviets by a major substantive agreement. Many in the U.S. see this as a significant accomplishment which reflects Soviet willingness to continue the process of negotiation started with President Nixon. But how do the Soviets see it? Might they not conclude that the new U.S. president is just a bit too eager to reach agreements? Might they not conclude that he is heavily influenced by experts who are advising him to make concessions to Soviet views in order to advance the process of negotiation? Might they not expect a further agreement to create additional opposition to the maintenance of ade-

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quate defense programs in the West? These suggestions may be premature, and they may turn out to be unwarranted, but one will want to watch the future course of negotiations closely to see what assumptions the Soviet leadership may be making based on their experience at Vladivostock.

SALT TWC  
Postulated 1986 Levels

	UNITED STATES		
	1975 TOTAL	1986 - Postulated TOTAL	MIRVd
ICBM	1054	1000	550-584
Polaris/Poseidon	656	656	496
Trident		240	240
Bombers	437 <sup>1</sup>	504 <sup>2</sup>	
1975 total	2147		1286-1320
1986 total		2400	

<sup>1</sup>Includes 40 mothballed bombers and 142 B-52 D & F which will be obsolete before 1986. Excludes 66 FB-111.

<sup>2</sup>Would include 249 B-1 if mothballed and obsolete bombers are phased out, and if FB-111 is not included in the agreement.

	SOVIET UNION		
ICBM	1618 <sup>3</sup>	1408 <sup>4</sup>	
SLBM <sup>5</sup>	740 <sup>3</sup>	950 <sup>4</sup>	1320
Bombers <sup>6</sup>	190	150	
1975 total	2548		
Less?		-108	
1986 total		2400	

<sup>3</sup>SALT ONE limits

<sup>4</sup>Assumes phase-out of 210 SS-7 & 8 by 1986 and replacement by SLBMs.

<sup>5</sup>Excludes 20 G-class boats with 60 missiles not included in SALT.

<sup>6</sup>Excludes Backfire.

Source: IISS, "The Military Balance", 1974-75.

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